

DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL

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CALIFORNIA TRAFFIC DEATHS LOWEST IN 34 YEARS

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) announced today that last year the state's traffic death toll dropped under 4,000 for the first time since 1961. "Reaching this landmark figure clearly shows that California motorists are taking to heart the traffic safety practices we have been recommending," CHP Commissioner Dwight Helmick said.

"As more people buckle up themselves and their children, avoid drinking and driving, obey the speed limit and wear motorcycle helmets, fewer deaths occur on our highways. I cannot over-emphasize how important it is to follow these simple safety rules," the Commissioner added.

The biggest percentage decline occurred in motorcycle fatalities. The 1996 total was 231, 11.5 percent lower than the 1995 total of 261 and 55 percent lower than the 1991 total of 512. 1991 was the last year before the helmet law was enforced.

The 1996 percentage of fatal collisions that involved alcohol was 31.6, the lowest since the CHP began to keep track of this figure in 1972. "For too many years alcohol was involved in more than half of all fatal crashes," Helmick said. "In 1985 it dipped below the 50 percent plateau, to 48.5 percent, and it's been slowly but surely declining ever since – to last year's low of 31.6 percent."

The state's mileage death rate (MDR) – the number of traffic fatalities per 100 million miles of vehicle travel – dropped to 1.43. "This is an historic low which is well below last year's 1.51 MDR," the Commissioner concluded.

[COMPLETE STATISTICS ON FOLLOWING PAGE]

COLLISION SUMMARY TOTAL - STATEWIDE

	<u>1996</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>Percent of Change</u>
<u>VICTIMS</u>			
KILLED			
Total	3,972	4,165	-4.6
Pedestrians	795	834	-4.7
Bicyclists	128	142	-9.9
Motorcyclists	231	261	-11.5
Moped Victims	1	-	∞
Vehicle Occupant	2,731	2,816	-3.0
Caused by Drunk Driving (DUI/PCF)	1,031	1,156	-10.8
Involving Alcohol (HBD)	1,254	1,343	-6.6
INJURED			
Total	300,106	304,941	-1.6
Pedestrians	16,011	16,007	*
Bicyclists	12,574	13,195	-4.7
Motorcyclists	7,777	8,591	-9.5
Moped Victims	84	99	-15.2
Vehicle Occupant	256,562	259,903	-1.3
Caused by Drunk Driving (DUI/PCF)	27,843	28,761	-3.2
Involving Alcohol (HBD)	35,654	36,961	-3.5
<u>COLLISIONS</u>			
FATAL			
Total	3,555	3,636	-2.2
Caused by Drunk Driving (DUI/PCF)	908	994	-8.7
Involving Alcohol (HBD)	1,113	1,163	-4.3
Involving Trucks	373	386	-3.4
Caused by Trucks	116	104	11.5
Caused by Speed	449	445	0.9
INJURY			
Total	193,805	196,569	-1.4
Caused by Drunk Driving (DUI/PCF)	17,347	17,846	-2.8
Involving Alcohol (HBD)	22,471	23,291	-3.5
Involving Trucks	8,348	8,738	-4.5
Caused by Trucks	3,963	4,225	-6.2
Caused by Speed	49,293	48,943	0.7
<u>DRIVERS</u>			
Drivers Under Influence of Alcohol and/or Drugs in Fatal Collisions	820	912	-10.1
Drivers Under Influence of Alcohol and/or Drugs in Injury Collisions	16,120	16,695	-3.4
HBD Drivers in Fatal Collisions	953	1,029	-7.4
HBD Drivers in Injury Collisions	21,006	21,775	-3.5
MILEAGE DEATH RATE	1.43	1.52	-5.9
VEHICLE MILES OF TRAVEL (Billions)	278.0 (est.)	274.8	1.2
TOTAL COLLISIONS	475,685	471,758	0.8

*Less than 0.1 percent.